(b) At the national level, the diversion of commodities is estimated to the extent of 36% in wheat-31% in rice and 23% in sugar.

(c) Public Distribution System is implemented under the joint responsibility of the Central and State Governments/UT Administrations. The Central Government is responsible for procurement, storage and transportation of the PDS commodities up to the Central godowns and making them available to the States. The responsibility for distribution to the consumers through the Fair Price Shops and administration of the PDS rests with the State Governments and UT Administrations. The findings of the TECS Report were discussed in the Meeting of the State Food Secretaries' held on 10.8.98. The TECS report was forwarded to the States/UTs for appropriate action so as to eliminate/minimise diversion. The State Governments have been requested to closely monitor the PDS at the Fair Price Shop and other levels and to make distribution of PDS commodities in a transparent and accountable manner by involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutes (PRIs) and activating Vigilance Committees etc. in implementation of PDS.

Import of Sugar

†414.SHRI KAPIL SIBAL:
SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that private sector had been allowed to import sugar in country;

.(b) if so, how much sugar was imported in the country during the 1997-98 and 1998-99;

(c) what is the quantity of sugar imported by private sector and Government sector, separately; and

(d) the reasons for giving a free hand to import sugar inspite of its substantial availability in the country during this period?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) Sugar was placed under Open General Licence (OGL) in March 1994. Since then, it has continued to be on OGL. However, imports of sugar have been subject to registration of import contracts with Agircultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) with effect from 15th September, 1997.

(b) During the financial year 1997-98 and 1998-99, imports of sugar are estimated at 3,46,905 and 8,57,691 tonnes respectively, as per statistical data of Director General of Commercial Intelligence & Services, Calcutta.

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†Original notice of the Question received in Hindi.

(c) Since import of sugar is on OGL private traders of corporate entities whether in the private or public sector are free to import sugar based on their best commercial judgement. Government does not monitor individual imports. There has been no import of sugar on Government account during the financial years 1997-98 and 1998-99.

(d) Imports of sugar are not free and it is subjected to payment of import duty of 25% plus 10% surcharge and countervailing duty of Rs. 850/- per tonne.

Import of Wheat

†415. SHRI BARJINDER SINGH HAMDARD:
SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that wheat is being imported by the country in large quantities;

(b) if so, the total quantity of wheat imported during 1998 and till September, 1999;

(c) whether the wheat importing flour mills have requested Government to bring down sale price of wheat by Food Corporation of India;

(d) if so, the decision taken by Government in this regard; and

(e) what was the total stock of wheat in the godowns of the Corporation in September, 1999, alongwith the quantity which was above the buffer stock?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SRIRAM CHAUHAN): (a) and (b) As per the EXIM Policy, import of wheat is canalised through the Food Corporation of India. However, in order augment the domestic availability of wheat. Roller Flour Mills were allowed with effect from 13.12.1996 to freely import wheat to meet their own requirement on actual user condition for milling purposes and sale of the resultant flour in the domestic market after registering their import contracts with Agricultural and Processed Food Product Export Development Authority (APEDA). With effect from 05.10.1998 Roller Flour Mills can freely import wheat either directly or throuth State Trading Corporation of India, Project Equipment Corporation and Metals and Minerals Trading Corporation of India and the flour produced out of imported wheat can be sold in the domestic market or be exported. The importers are required only to inform the details of imports and exports to APEDA.

No separate details of imports by FCI and Roller Flour Mills are maintained by the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI&S), Calcutta. However, 14.15 lakh tonnes of wheat was imported during 1998-99 on government account. There was no import of wheat on Government account during 1999-2000, so far.

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†Original notice of the Question received in Hindi.